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ABSTRACT

This study identified 18 physical educators' perspectives on 3 critical elements of physical education teacher education (PETE) governance, curriculum, and evaluation. Data were collected through 90-minute audiotaped interviews. Establishment of data trustworthiness was achieved through triangulation by using member checks and a peer debriefer. Data were analyzed using analytic induction and an interpretive analytical framework. As themes emerged from the data, they were checked with participants for comment and validation. Results revealed that teachers perceived the knowledge of learners, content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge as the most important pieces of information that undergraduates should receive in the PETE program. They believed methods classes were the most effective courses that undergraduates could take. Believing early field experiences to be important in preparing physical educators, the practitioners felt that early field experiences should be longer in duration, occur earlier in the program, occur more often in the curriculum, and be conducted at schools of varying characteristics. Practitioners felt qualified, but excluded, in the governance of teacher education. They believed they would be able to provide help in evaluating a teacher preparation program, but had yet to be asked. (Contains 52 references.) (Author/SM)

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Running Head: PRACTITIONERS' PERSPECTIVES

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Teacher's Beliefs About PETE Program Governance, Curriculum, and Evaluation

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the perspectives of practitioners regarding physical education teacher education (PETE) governance, curriculum and evaluation. Subjects for this study were 18 physical educators from Georgia. From the works of Bain (1990), Houston (1990), and Locke (1984) three critical elements of teacher preparation were identified: (a) curriculum, (b) governance, and (c) evaluation. Data were collected through 90 minute structured and semi-structured interviews. The interviews were audiotaped, and the tapes were transcribed. Establishment of data trustworthiness was done through triangulation by using member checks (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) and a peer debriefer. Data were analyzed by the use of analytic induction and an interpretive analytical framework. As themes emerged from the data, they were checked with selected participants for comment and validation. Data analysis revealed that the teachers perceived the knowledge of learners, content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge as the most important pieces of information that undergraduates should receive in the PETE program. They also believed methods classes were the most effective courses that undergraduates could take. Believing early field experiences (EFEs) to be important in the preparation of physical education teachers, the practitioners believed that EFEs should be longer in duration, take place earlier in the career of the undergraduate, occur more often in the curriculum, and be conducted at schools of varying characteristics. Additionally, practitioners in this study felt qualified, but excluded in the governance of teacher education. They also believed that they would be able to provide help in the evaluation of a teacher preparation program, but have yet to be asked.

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Teacher's Beliefs About PETE Program Governance, Curriculum, and Evaluation

It has often been alleged that teaching is art, science, craft, and labor. The debate on whether it most closely resembles any single description can carry on ad infinitum. However, two facts remain indisputable. First, an individual must possess certain skills in order to teach effectively. Second, these skills need to be learned; one is not born with them. The vehicle by which these skills are formally learned by public school teachers is preservice preparation (Gimmestad & Hall, 1995). Therefore, preparation has a significant influence on teachers and it is here where teachers learn their trade. However, in recent years it has been noted that teacher education is experiencing trouble achieving its objectives of equipping individuals for teaching in the public schools (Goodlad, 1990, 1991). Apparently, teacher education is in need of considerable improvement and it is therefore, necessary to study it in order to improve it.

Reviews of teacher preparation, in general education by Houston (1990), and particularly in physical education by Bain (1990) and Locke (1984), consistently identify three areas of teacher education that are essential to the operation of the teacher preparation enterprise: (a) governance, (b) curriculum, and (c) evaluation. Governance determines the policy of what pre-service teachers will learn (curriculum), curriculum determines how pre-service teachers (PTs) will learn and evaluation assesses if the curriculum is, indeed, working. In the field of physical education teacher education (PETE), research efforts aimed toward improving some of these aspects have been undertaken. Curricular elements such as coursework (O'Sullivan & Tsangaridou, 1992), early field experiences (EFEs) (Gusthart & Rink, 1983), and student teaching (Schempp, 1985) have been given modest attention by researchers. The topics of governance and evaluation (see Metzler & Tjeerdsma, 1998), however, have been given little attention.

Governance is the process of determining what is taught in PETE programs. It is defined by Gideonse (1995) as any policy or action taken by lawmaking bodies or professional organizations that concerns the recruitment and preparation of teachers and the maintenance and enhancement of their skills. Although viewed as a lesser influence compared to components previously listed, Houston (1990) includes governance as an important factor in teacher education. In the United States, most state agencies establish policy and criteria for teacher certification (Clark & McNergney, 1990). Such principles, guidelines, and requirements dictate what is taught in the teacher preparation programs and, therefore, exert influence on teacher preparation (Oliver, 1989). Other groups influence policy and thus, help govern teacher education programs: (a) professional associations, (b) national and regional accreditation agencies, and (c) teacher education faculty and administrators (Peseau 1982). Each affects governance at different levels and in different ways. Professional organizations such as the American

Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (AAHPERD), the National Association for Physical Education in Higher Education (NAPEHE), Council on Physical Education for Children (COPEC), and National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) influence policy by publishing benchmarks for physical education teachers and programs and also offer leadership and political power for members (Kneer, 1989). The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) establishes standards for PETE programs and conducts evaluations to ensure that the programs are meeting the standards. The teacher education faculty ultimately decides what classes are offered to students in preparation programs and how criterion set by the state will be met (Schwanke, 1982) and determines how to design and finance teacher education program (Peseau, 1982).

Teacher preparation curriculum can be defined as the knowledge gained, formal coursework and supporting experiences at the university and in public schools. It is through teacher education curriculum that teachers gain the requisite knowledge leading to certification and, subsequently, entry into the schools. Shulman (1987) identified seven types of knowledge necessary for all teachers to possess: (a) pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), (b) content knowledge, (c) curricular knowledge, (d) knowledge of learners, (e) knowledge of educational contexts, (f) knowledge of educational purposes, and (g) general pedagogical knowledge. In physical education, efforts to study the acquisition of these types of knowledge have shown that preservice teachers have limited content knowledge (Rovegno, 1993).

The vehicles by which this knowledge is conveyed in teacher education programs are called "process variables" (Locke, 1984, p. 18). Examples of such are coursework, EFEs, and student-teaching. Goodlad (1990) noted that, in order for coursework to be effective in developing teaching skills, it must be a convergence of theory and practice and two studies in physical education have shown that it can do this effectively (Curtner-Smith, 1996; O'Sullivan & Tsangaridou, 1992). EFEs provide opportunities for PTs to interact with pupils in a school setting, practice teaching skills, and become socialized to being in a school (Dodds, 1989). The culminating experience in preservice training is student teaching which has been the most thoroughly researched aspect of PETE (Locke, 1984). Student teaching consists of PTs being in a public school acting as full-time teachers for a period of time under the continual supervision of a cooperating teacher (CT).

Finally, evaluation of teacher education programs is of major importance (Houston, 1990). Evaluation is defined by Galluzzo and Craig (1990) as:

> A data collection process wherein the focus is on making decisions about the degree to which educational programs, projects, or materials are valued to the participants they are intended to serve and to the system in which evaluation operates. (p. 599)

Primarily, in teacher education, evaluation can be used to determine the value and merit of a program. However, it can also be used for accountability purposes, continual improvement of, understanding of, and deriving knowledge about the program (Galluzzo & Craig, 1990).

Some models of evaluation used in general education have been objectives-based, in which programs are evaluated on the achievement of certain goals and behavioral objectives. Other models are decision-facilitation evaluation (Popham, 1975) in which the evaluator acts as a collector of data to be presented to those who make decisions about the program. PETE programs have been evaluated by surveying opinions of graduates (Fisher, 1975) and observing teaching behaviors of program graduates (Falcone, 1978; Freedman, 1978). Opinion surveys focus on the overall satisfaction of the graduates about the usefulness of their programs. Evaluating the teaching behaviors of graduates consists of observing graduates teach and determining the extent to which their behaviors reflect the objectives of the teacher preparation program. However, it has been noted that although these types of evaluation provide appropriate feedback as to the merit of the PETE program, they are expensive (Locke, 1984). According to Locke (1984), the major themes emerging from these types of evaluations were: more teaching experiences are needed, theory should be integrated with practice, and graduates are unprepared to handle topics such as discipline, coeducational classes, grading, and individual differences among the students in their classes. Recently, Metzler and Tjeerdsma (1998) proposed a framework for a comprehensive program assessment that utilizes systematic observation, qualitative techniques, and psychometric instruments.

Unfortunately, one perspective on these important areas of PETE that has been ignored is that of those who have completed a preparation program, taught, and are now able to offer valid feedback on the design of teacher education -- teachers in the field. Those in the field have much to offer those looking to improve teacher education programs. Some researchers have attempted to gather the perceptions of practitioners on assorted topics in physical education (O'Sullivan, Siedentop, & Tannehill, 1994; Parker, 1995; Pissanos, 1995; Smyth, 1995), but none have identified their perceptions on PETE program governance, curriculum, and evaluation. Thus, it would seem logical that research on these topics from this unusual, but logical, perspective would be in order. Research that provides data on the integration of these components and how each affects the quality of physical education teacher preparation programs will help PETE faculty to better understand the program as a whole (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) and therefore assist in the process of preparing teachers.

Purpose of the Study

Responding to Bain's (1990) call to find better ways to prepare physical education teachers, research on the critical components of PETE programs is needed. New perspectives such as those from practitioners must be

gained. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine the perspectives of practitioners regarding PETE governance, curriculum and evaluation.

To address the purpose of this study, the following questions guided the data collection and analysis: (a) what role should institutions, organizations, agencies, and individuals play in designing programs of teacher education, and how should the participants of teacher preparation be involved?, (b) what types of knowledge are important in the preparation of physical education teachers and what kinds of experiences should provide this knowledge?, and (c) what types of evaluations should be applied to PETE programs, by whom, and how often?

Method

The primary source of data came from interviews with practicing physical educators. Using a variety of interview techniques, the teachers were encouraged to respond in detail. Interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes. Follow-up interviews, in person or by phone, were used when clarification, expansion, or accuracy checks were deemed necessary by the researcher.

Theoretical Perspective

Interpretivism served as the theoretical framework for this study. The interpretivist theory aids the understanding of the perspectives of practitioners regarding the governance, curriculum, and evaluation of PETE programs. This perspective recognizes that human experiences have a significant effect on a person's understanding and that it provides an insight that is important (Schwandt, 1994). These practitioners have extensive experiences with PETE programs and thus, have first hand knowledge of PETE programs. All of the practitioners have served as undergraduates in teacher education programs and, in their professional capacity have interacted with and, in some cases, served as cooperating teachers. Therefore, their unique experiences provide them with a template, or interpretation, of how PETE governance, curriculum, and evaluation should operate in order to effectively prepare teachers.

Participants

Eighteen physical education teachers from Georgia participated. Participants were drawn from three sources: (a) a list of teachers provided by the Georgia Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (GAHPERD), (b) a list provided by the coordinator of physical education for a local school district, and (c) lists of previous participants in research projects. The teachers were selected for a representative sample of urban, rural, and suburban schools and grade levels and was sensitive to the issues of race and gender by selecting African-American (n=5), Caucasian (n=13), female (n=9), and male (n=9) teachers.

Selected teachers were contacted by letter requesting their participation, explaining the study, and

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indicating that they would be contacted by phone for confirmation of participation. Averaging 14.5 years of teaching experience, the range of years experience of the practitioners was four to 28. Seven teachers taught at the elementary school level, six middle school, and five taught high school. One teacher was a national teacher of the year and one was a state teacher of the year. Over half of the subjects had masters degrees, and two had obtained their doctorate. These practitioners obtained their degrees from a variety of colleges and universities that were both small and large, public and private. Over half of the sample were coaching or had coached at some point in their careers and were currently serving as CTs or had served as CTs throughout their careers.

Data Collection Techniques

The major data collection technique for this study was the qualitative interview. Fontana and Frey (1995) echo the merits of interviewing: "interviewing is one of the most common and most powerful ways we use to try to understand our fellow human beings" (p.361). A set of structured and semi-structured interviews was used based on the elements of PETE that derived from a review of the literature. The questions covered all three aspects and ensured that the researcher gathered practitioners' perspectives on the governance, curriculum and evaluation of PETE programs. In the case that more questions arose during data analysis, follow-up interviews were used to obtain more information from the participant. To clarify emerging themes and check data accuracy, the questions covered the components of a PETE program that were based on the review of literature.

Each 90 minute interview was audiotaped and transcribed. Follow-up interviews were used when deemed necessary. During each interview, the researcher took measures to remain personally uninvolved with the teacher (Kvale, 1996; Mishler, 1986). For example, the researcher refrained from interacting socially with the subjects and kept a personal journal (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) that could have been reviewed by a peer debriefer for any indication that the researcher was becoming "attached" to the subjects (Adler & Adler, 1987) and to monitor research activities. The interviews took place in a mutually agreed upon location. Teachers were given an informed consent form and asked to sign it. Both teacher and researcher kept a copy. The teachers were informed of the purpose of the study, that their participation is voluntary and they may withdraw at any time.

Data Analysis Techniques

Interview data were analyzed through analytic induction (Manning, 1991) which is the process of drawing themes and commonalities from data. By focusing on the common themes, one is better able to understand the participants' viewpoints and experiences (Patton, 1990). A composite of practitioners' views regarding the governance, curriculum and evaluation of PETE programs was developed from all the data gathered in the interviews.

Huberman and Miles (1995) four stages were used in this study's data analysis. In the first stage, the researcher conducted data collection and early analyses. Data was coded, summarized, placed into themes, or clustered during the second stage, data reduction when coding the answers, the conceptual framework derived from the literature review was used. For example, answers about governance were placed in cluster of "governance answers" and themes were drawn from those answers regarding teachers' perceptions PETE program governance.

The third stage, data display involved compressing the information so that conclusions could be drawn and action is taken. In this stage, the researcher placed the data in smaller forms that took on different constructs such as vignettes, diagrams and matrices (Huberman & Miles, 1995). The final stage of this data analysis was conclusion drawing and verification. It was during this phase that the researcher determined the meaning of the collected data.

Data Trustworthiness

To address the issue of data trustworthiness, triangulation of the data was conducted (Patton, 1990). Defined by Stake (1994) triangulation is "a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation" (p.241). Triangulation of data was done by using member checks (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) which entailed returning the data to the subjects for their own analysis. The audiotape(s) and notes were transcribed. The transcriptions were given back to the teachers for a member check. This allowed them to refute or correct anything they said and/or felt was inaccurate. As themes emerged from the data, selected participants were asked to verify and comment. Contradictory themes were brought back to participants for clarification.

To ensure data trustworthiness, a peer debriefer was used. Following interviews, the researcher discussed the interview process with a peer who had extensive experience with interviewing and qualitative data analysis. In addition to allowing the peer debriefer to comment on emerging themes and clarify the perceptions of the researcher, it was done to ensure that the researcher kept the interviews focused on answering the research question and not allowing the interviews to stray into a personal conversation unrelated to the topic.

Findings

This study utilized the interpretivist theory as a framework. This theory views personal experiences as essential to understanding the phenomenon being studied. The practitioners in this study were interviewed for their perspectives on PETE because of their experiences with it. From interview responses, themes and commonalities emerged and are reported in the following sections: (a) PETE governance, (b) PETE curriculum, and (c) PETE program evaluation.

PETE Governance

The first research question for this study addressed the teachers' perceptions of the governance of teacher education programs. Specifically, it asked, "What role should institutions, organizations, agencies, and individuals play in designing programs of teacher education, and how should the participants of teacher preparation be involved?" This portion of the interview provided teachers with the opportunity to express their ideas and beliefs about the policy and decision making processes regarding the occupational preparation of physical education teachers.

Five themes emerged from the responses of the practitioners regarding governance: (a) they do not believe that officials from state governments should be involved in the process, (b) they feel that the process should be a collaboration between university faculties and practitioners, (c) they feel qualified to be a part of the process, (d) currently, they feel excluded, and (e) they believed those professional organizations such as the state Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (AHPERD) could and should have an influence in the governance of PETE programs.

The teachers vehemently expressed the opinion that politicians and state government officials should not be involved in the process of determining requirements to be met in order to teach physical education in the public school. According to the teachers, as much as these people claim to know about education, they are still too far removed from the physical education classroom and are not qualified to determine the skills necessary to teach physical education. The teachers noted that rarely are people with physical education backgrounds at the state level making decisions regarding PETE programs. The teachers thought it logical that those closest to the situation should be making the decisions regarding preparation. Furthermore, many of the teachers did not believe that state level officials were tied to the PETE programs and the needs of local governing agencies such as district school boards. According to one teacher:

> The state is out in left field. We have people making laws and setting standards who don't know what is going on in the school system.

The majority of the teachers believed that although university faculty were somewhat removed from the classroom, they still had ample knowledge of the skills necessary to teach physical education in public schools and how to develop that knowledge in PTs. The teachers believed that since university faculty members had at least taught physical education at one point or another in their careers that they could, and should, provide insight into the preparation of undergraduates.

However, the teachers believed that since some faculty members have not been in the schools for an

extended period of time, that this may call for input from other sources to validate their beliefs and actions. This input, according to many of the teachers, should come from practitioners. Given their experience as students in PETE programs and their experience as public school physical education teachers, the teachers viewed themselves as obvious sources for information and counsel. In the teachers' opinion, if future teachers were to be prepared properly, it must be done through collaboration, not by one body. One teacher stated:

> [It needs to be done by] people fighting the war and people reading the books and doing research on the war. I mean it takes everybody. To get the best product you've got to work together like that. If you don't work together, you will always be accused of being in the ivory tower making decisions. Once you give other people a voice, it'll change. I think that's important.

Another teacher concurred:

> It ought to be a shared governance with students, practicum teachers, practitioners, and university faculty. Sometimes the university ignores the voices of the others. It's like, "this is our area and, we'll show you what they (undergraduates) are going to learn because we know best." It seems like there ought to be some way to get a little bit of input from a practitioner.

Practically all of the teachers interviewed felt they had valuable knowledge to offer those in charge of decision making regarding PETE. The teachers believed this for two reasons. First, they work closely with PTs and STs and are able to provide feedback as to what the students are lacking and what should be addressed in the undergraduate curriculum. Second, they are public school physical education teachers. The purpose of these programs is to prepare students for a job that they already hold themselves. Thus, it is reasonable that they would know what it takes to be a teacher in the public schools. One teacher expressed the logical sentiment this way:

> If we are training these people to do what we're doing, and you are not asking us what needs to be done ahead of time before they get to the student teaching experience . . . who else could sit and make judgments on what we're doing day by day?

While advocating collaboration, a few of the teachers asserted that not all their colleagues were suited for inclusion. As stated earlier, these teachers were realists and did not believe that the partnership between the university faculty and the teachers could be equal, or that every teacher should have input as to what is needed in teacher preparation programs. Many teachers knew colleagues that should and should not be consulted. A screening process was recommended before including input from the teachers. One teacher relayed a story about a recent trip to a district meeting of AAHPERD which describes this sentiment:

> I had about 75 practitioners in there, all members of AAHPERD. I asked them what were the first two

national standards. Not one of them could tell me what they were.

The point the teacher was trying to make was that not all teachers were totally qualified to be involved in the governance process. However, he believed that the input from practitioners could lend credence to any decisions made by university faculty. One teacher elaborated on this point:

> I don't think all of us have something to offer. If you were to collaborate with public and private school physical education teachers, there ought to be some criteria that they have to meet. The teacher has to be able to show that they have experience and dedication to the profession of teaching, not just those who are worried about being coaches.

The overwhelming majority of the teachers felt that the collaboration process was basically nonexistent. The teachers felt that they have much to offer university faculties who are making decisions about PETE programs, but noted they are almost never included in the process. Their contributions to PETE, as it stands presently, are mentoring practicum students or student teachers for a semester. However, according to the teachers, this was the end of their influence. One teacher expressed his communication with a university as consisting of only a "thank you" for supervising a PT.

A small portion of the teachers remarked that this study was the first time someone from a university setting had ever inquired about their thoughts on a process that they feel is important. Some added that it was the first time they had experienced some voice in the process of preparing teachers beyond the cooperating teacher role. As one teacher stated:

> To be honest, your study is the first time that I have had an opportunity to give somebody feedback into what I think should happen in teacher preparation.

Finally, the teachers addressed the role of organizations in PETE governance. The theme emanating from this discussion was that professional organizations, such as the state AHPERD, should play a part in PETE governance. Most teachers felt that since these organizations are made up of practitioners, students, and university faculty, they truly represent the collaboration among all those should be involved with teacher preparation. The amalgamation of various members offers two important characteristics for the shared governance advocated by the teachers. First, according to some of the teachers, the members are usually members because they care about the profession. Second, the state, district, and national conventions held by these organizations offer excellent opportunities for collaboration to take place. Additionally, it was felt by some teachers that state organizations had lobbying power in state governments where many decisions concerning PETE (unfortunately, according to these teachers) take place.

Not all teachers were convinced that these organizations should be involved in the governance process or that they do play a part in the process. It was the perception of some of the teachers that the leadership positions in professional organizations are usually held by those at the university level. Therefore, if professional organizations were directly involved in the governance of PETE, they would not represent the diversity of its membership. Furthermore, the teachers believed those professional organizations, in their current roles, do not contribute to PETE governance. This was due in part to the fact that the state governing agencies and the university governing agencies are not reaching out to these organizations and asking for input regarding the preparation of physical education teachers.

PETE Curriculum

The second research question for this study asked, "What types of knowledge are important in the preparation of physical education teachers and through what kinds of experiences should they gain this knowledge?" The teachers offered views on the types of knowledge that should be gained and identified, and appropriate courses for gaining that knowledge. The teachers also offered their perceptions of two major components of a PETE program: early field experiences (EFEs) and student teaching. The findings will be presented in three sections: (a) knowledge and coursework, (b) early field experiences, and (c) student teaching.

Knowledge and coursework. During this portion of the interview, the teachers were asked to complete a card-sorting task similar to the one conducted by Fincher and Schempp (1994). Each card was labeled with a different type of knowledge as identified by Shulman (1987) as necessary for teaching. Teachers were asked to rank each card in order of importance for teaching public school physical education. Subsequently, the teachers were asked which classes were most effective in providing PTs with this knowledge. Constantly emanating from the teachers' rankings was the theme that three types of knowledge were deemed most vital for future physical education teachers and their imminent teaching in public schools: (a) knowledge of learners, (b) subject matter content knowledge, and (c) pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Additionally, the theme of more methods courses arose from the teachers' responses.

More than 90% of the teachers ranked "knowledge of learners and their characteristics" as one of their three most important types of knowledge for professional practice. The essence of teaching appears to be knowledge and understanding of students and their learning. It was important for a PT to have a knowledge of learners because the students were the reason for the teacher's existence. Thus, it was important to understand individual learning styles, personal backgrounds and how these affect student learning and behavior. The teachers expressed the importance of this knowledge in the following manner:

> I think knowledge of the learner is primary. I think the biggest need for a teacher is to understand that everybody does not learn in the same way, and you, as a teacher, have got to be dedicated enough, energetic enough, driven enough that you are going to understand that people learn differently, and you are going to find different ways to reach all these different kinds of kids.

Two teachers underscored the importance of knowledge of learners by indicating it was a prerequisite for the other types of knowledge deemed important by Shulman (1987), such as PCK, curriculum knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge. The teachers claim that knowing the learner is the foundation of teaching and before one can teach, they must know whom they are teaching. One teacher conveyed it this way:

> Before I can do anything with curriculum or pedagogy or anything like that, I've got to know whom I am talking to here. . . If you are going to try and teach a 6-year-old the way you would teach a 12-year-old, you are going to be in trouble. You have to be able to understand what is going on in their lives. What are the things happening to them personally, emotionally, physically that will influence what you do in the classroom.
>
> You could have all the information in the world, and know how to give it to this person, but if you don't know the way the kid learns, or the way the learning is at that level, then you won't be able to get across to them.

The teachers also thought it crucial that new teachers graduate with a strong content knowledge. The teachers felt that when one begins a job as a physical education teacher, one should have an overreaching knowledge of the content: sports, activity, fitness, and dance. Having this knowledge allows a teacher to be more successful because he or she will be able to teach a wider variety of skills to a wider variety of learners. One teacher likened this to the example that she would not want a cardiologist operating on her if the cardiologist did not know where the ventricles were. When the teachers were asked why this was important, they responded in an incredulous manner, as if to say, "Isn't this obvious?"

> They (undergraduate physical education majors) come out and they don't have it. I have college kids coming out and they don't even know the rules to the game of badminton. Now that gets down to the heart of the matter. P.E. teachers need to be a veritable plethora of knowledge about their field . . . they should be able to pick up all these different skills and know something about it. You don't have to be a professional, but know about it.

On the contrary, a few of the teachers saw this knowledge as unimportant to learn in a teacher preparation program. Although it was not a predominant theme, it was thought that this type of knowledge is what leads future physical

education teachers to the field and a bulk of the content knowledge have already been learned before entering the PETE program. One teacher described this opinion in the following manner:

> I think most (potential) physical education teachers pretty much have a content knowledge before they come into the field . . . or they wouldn't be in the field, or at least they have some expertise in something that led them into the field. Also, I think you can't get that (content knowledge) from books.

Finally, the ability to transform the content into meaningful forms for the learners – PCK – was also regarded as important. While PCK was not noted to be as important as the knowledge of learners and content, it is harmonious with the notion that knowledge of learners and content is also important. All three types of knowledge are closely related and in order to have PCK one must have the other two types of knowledge. One must know the learners and the content before they obtain PCK. A teacher stated:

> You've got to give people the knowledge that there is a certain amount of science to this work and that there are teaching methods that work and teaching methods that are better for some than others. I think that's the art of teaching. That's what it's all about.
>
> We need to be able to know what to teach and how to adapt to certain situations . . .Once I can acquire this type of knowledge, then I can teach all kids and they can benefit from this.

A strong theme from the data was the courses that best provide this PCK were methods classes. The teachers defined a methods course as one in which the basics of teaching were addressed and practiced. Skills such as planning, classroom management, skill analysis, dealing with diverse populations, skill presentation, student evaluation, and other daily responsibilities would be taught in the methods course. These methods classes are sometimes designed specifically for a grade level or a sport. Although, the teachers did express their feelings that the content classes such as teaching sport skills, exercise physiology, and others were important, they felt it was during the methods classes that these teachers gained the requisite knowledge for teaching physical education in the public schools. Many of the teachers believed that undergraduates could not have enough of these types of classes. As two teachers opined, "One course is not enough."

To the teachers, methods courses provided undergraduates with the knowledge of learners, content knowledge, and PCK. It also seems that pedagogical knowledge is also gained. However, pedagogical knowledge was not included in their rankings as one of the most important types of knowledge. As one teacher put it:

> Methods classes are really the nuts and bolts of what we do. They almost could be shortchanged in anything else except methods classes.

The teachers thought that a class consisting of observation and then, eventually, application of these skills would be

most beneficial to future teachers. From their experience, they seem to think that PTs are currently lacking in areas that methods courses are purporting to cover. For instance, one teacher voiced her dissatisfaction with the skills of some of her more recent PTs:

> I think one of the really critical issues that they're missing right now is some type of classroom management. Classroom management seems to be the main area of weakness as student teachers are coming out of the programs. They have the energy and the enthusiasm, but the dealing with students in a classroom setting and what types of strategies to use to get the students to do what they are supposed to do, I think there is a weakness in that area.

Teachers considered observation and working with master teachers as a major component of a methods course. It would be during this time that skills that possibly could not be taught in the college classroom would also be taught. One teacher provided an interesting analogy to describe why this is an important and logical portion of the methods classes:

> If we were business majors, we'd be going to Xerox.

Early field experiences (EFEs). Consistent with the data was the theme that practical experience during teacher preparation is vital to future success in teaching physical education. Besides methods courses, one way in which PTs receive this seasoning is through the EFE or practicum. It is during the EFE that PTs are able to combine theory learned in the classroom with practice in a public school (Dodds, 1989). Although the ways in which EFEs are conducted vary from program to program, most consist of the undergraduates going into the schools and performing a number of tasks ranging from observation to teaching a whole class. Usually, the PTs spend only a little time in the school during a few days of the week, eventually leading to the student teaching experience in which they spend the entire day. The practitioners viewed the EFE as the most notable undergraduate encounter, in that they would learn the most about teaching during this time. However, sentiment among the teachers was that these experiences are lacking in some areas concerning their design. Four major themes materialized from the teachers responses. The teachers thought that EFEs should be: (a) longer in duration, (b) occur earlier in the undergraduate career, (c) occur more often, and (d) occur in schools with varying characteristics.

Increasing the duration of the EFE was a strong theme for the teachers. In other words, they thought that the PTs needed to spend more time in the gymnasium observing and teaching students when they did come into the schools. Spending only 30-60 minutes per visit, in the opinion of the teachers, was not enough. Furthermore, just spending a week or two in a public school setting for a short amount of time was just as inadequate. Most teachers thought that spending half days or more would allow the PTs to more clearly gain an appreciation of how the school

worked, to interact with pupils, and to practice their teaching skills. The teachers also thought that if these experiences lasted the entire semester or quarter that their influence on the PT would increase. In the eyes of these teachers, the current manner in which EFEs are conducted does not allow for this type of interaction. Interestingly, one teacher compared EFEs that last only a short period of time to movie previews:

> It's sort of like seeing a clip of a movie. Sometimes the clip looks good and then when you see the movie, it stinks. EFEs need to allow the students to see the whole picture. They need to feel how it is at 4:00 p.m. and you are dragging and you've got to go to a faculty meeting or to a ballgame. That is what it is to work. It gives them time to say, "Hey, this is too much work" and have a chance to do something else.

A secondary theme was that EFEs should occur early in the undergraduate career. The teachers' reasoning for this was twofold. First, by allowing PTs the opportunity to see how a public school physical education class operates early in their college career, they can make an informed decision regarding career choice. This alleviates the problem of having a PT make a career decision with which he or she may be unhappy and being forced to pursue it because it is too late in the student's career to change. This is underscored by the logic that if one is not happy teaching physical education that he or she will probably not do a suitable job teaching physical education. As one teacher stated:

> I think that if they are not in the schools by the end of their sophomore year, that's too late. I think people really just find that teaching is not for them during these experiences, and they need to get out of it sooner than that. It should be designed this way out of respect for the person. I believe that universities really draw in people and they wait to a certain point to let them experience the classes that are the "do or die" classes.

Second, the process of getting in the schools early allows for PTs to gain more experience in the public schools. Allowing undergraduates to get into the schools early in their college careers can only make them better teachers, according to these teachers. Experience provides PTs with encounters that could never be re-created in a university classroom and thus, a knowledge base in which to ground future decisions as a teacher. One teacher adamantly expressed his feelings about the importance of getting into the schools early:

> I don't think you can get in early enough. I think that is a function of manner of time and days and the more you are out there the better your student teaching experience will be.

Furthermore, the teachers' perceptions of the EFE indicated that they needed to occur more often within the PETE curriculum. Whether they are included as part of a methods course, an adapted physical education class, or just by themselves, the teachers believed that the more, the better prepared they would be when it came time for

the student teaching experience and for their first teaching position. The consensus was that no less than three separate EFEs should be required of the PT before student teaching. More specifically, at least one per semester before student teaching was perceived to be the least amount that should be required. If the EFEs were to start early in the PT's career, then more than three could be scheduled. Within each EFE, the teachers wanted to see the PTs come more than once-a week for a few weeks. Confirming this theme is the following thought from a teacher:

> I would like to see them come in 20 times during the semester and spend four hours a day. I think this is important because they will begin to better understand the school setting and how it is a functioning social institution. They need to know how to do all the simple things such as copying, the bus duty thing, field day, and any other extra duties that may come your way. This time allows them to experience all the things they don't hear about in school. Also, this way when it comes time for student teaching, they are ready to teach the first couple of weeks and are able to get more practice.

Finally, having EFEs conducted in schools with varying features was a characteristic teachers felt was important about the design of the EFEs. In other words, EFEs needed to occur at the elementary, middle, and high schools and had to reflect the socioeconomic spectrum from affluent suburban schools to inner-city schools. Teachers not only believed that the quantity of experience was important, but quality was as well. If PTs were not exposed to a variety of schools, they are denied opportunities to work in a collection of settings which could prove beneficial to their preparation. One teacher stated:

> They need to get a sense of all types of schools. They need to see the affluent white school where everything is cheesy in looks, and then your inner city where it's a little harder. I think they need to see all levels of the socioeconomic range.

Another teacher eloquently voiced concern as to why providing PTs with multiple opportunities to interact with students of today's diverse culture is important:

> You (the teacher) are going to come into contact with a multi-cultured, diverse group. And you should know how to deal with all situations that you may be confronted within this group. Sometimes we (teachers) come in here with preconceived ideas about how it's going to be and then when we get here we are really dealing with a different situation. I think a lot of student teachers and practicum students come in not knowing that because of where they went to school, and the university situation from which they come. Even the teachers there might not be realistic about what goes on in the schools.

Student teaching. Only a small number of teachers felt the student teaching experience was in dire need of change. However, the teachers did provide valuable insight into the student teaching experience which might prove

more meaningful for the PTs. Four themes evolved from the teachers' answers: (a) although they recognized the problems of having to spend an extra semester in school, they thought that, if it was feasible, STs should have two semesters or a full academic year of student teaching, (b) the observation period during student teaching should be shortened, (c) all responsibilities of the teacher should be assumed by the ST, and although not all teachers agreed, this should include coaching, and (d) the ST should be given the opportunity to teach at all grade levels.

While a small number of the teachers felt that the student teaching experience, as it stands, was adequate, a majority of the teachers thought that it did not provide ST with enough time to teach. The teachers felt that by the time a ST's assignment was completed he or she would be just getting a feel for being a physical education teacher in the public schools. Therefore, student teaching was not serving its purpose of providing the real-life experience to the ST. Some teachers remarked that the short amount of time spent in student teaching did not allow for the ebbs and flows of the school year. A few teachers felt that STs needed to see how different parts of the school year, such as the beginning and end of the year, mean different things for the physical education teacher. For example, the beginning of the year meant establishing rules and routines, establishing baseline measurements needed for evaluation purposes, and dealing with administrative tasks like assigning lockers. One teacher articulated his preference for extending student teaching experiences and the logic that it represents:

> I think student teaching, set up the way it is now, is insufficient. You spend so much time trying to get the guy or the girl ready to teach, that when they really start teaching, they don't teach enough.

The teachers overwhelmingly thought the observation period for STs should be no more than two weeks and STs should have the exact responsibilities of the CT. To the teachers, observing served a beneficial purpose by acquainting the ST with the surroundings. While they saw it as essential, they did not believe that the observation period had to last more than two weeks. They saw anything longer than two weeks as detracting from the student teaching experience. Therefore, they viewed this short period as limiting what they viewed as so important. Referring back to his student teaching days, one teacher thought that immediate teaching was the best way to learn and that, if done correctly, the EFE's should have prepared them for student teaching. However, most teachers agreed that it was best to gradually induce the ST into being the full-time teacher.

When it came to the subject of accepting the responsibilities of the CT the teachers all agreed that required non-teaching obligations should be experienced by STs. Tasks such as bus duty, lunch duty, after-school duty, study hall, and hall monitoring will be expected of STs when they obtain their first job, therefore, they should undertake them as well. Teachers firmly believed that in performing these responsibilities, a ST would get a better sense of what will be expected of them when they take jobs in public schools. Therefore, it is good experience for

the ST to assume some of these responsibilities now.

One extracurricular job that is common among physical education teachers is coaching. The teachers had strong, but divided feelings about requiring ST to coach during student teaching. A few of the teachers felt that it was necessary to sample coaching if the ST was to get the "true" experience of a physical education teacher. This was especially true for the middle and high school teachers who were interviewed. Many, but not all, were coaches. These teachers believed that if an undergraduate aspired to teach at the secondary level he or she would probably be expected to coach. Therefore, coaching during a secondary level student teaching experience would be advantageous.

Others thought that it was too much to demand coaching of a ST who may also be working to support himself or herself or possibly taking classes. The teachers who opposed the coaching requirement during ST, felt it could lessen the teaching experience by giving the ST something else on which to concentrate, thus, leading to a possible indoctrination into the teacher-coach role conflict. However, most teachers did agree that if a ST planned to coach, they should have the option of coaching along with student teaching. Examples of the divisiveness on this topic are provided by these two teachers:

> I think coaching would be beneficial because sometimes that's how we get our jobs. Often coaches are admired in the school and other times they are the old stereotypes, so I think they need to feel that balance of a coach and see the difference between what a coach and a teacher is.
>
> I don't think that coaching should be grouped under student teaching. However, if you feel like you would like to coach you should be given that opportunity by assisting at the school where you are student teaching.

Including all levels in the student teaching experience was a theme that resonated from the data. Many of the teachers felt that if the entire student teaching experience was spent at one level, the ST was being deprived of valuable experience and was not really becoming certified to teach all grades, as is the case in most states. According to the teachers, it also made the ST more marketable when it came time to apply for jobs. If a recent graduate had taught at the level for which he or she was applying, it would illustrate that they were able to teach that particular level. Subsequently, a teacher who is in need of a job may have no choice as to what level they will teach, and this experience would present the ST with a variety of experience that would be valuable because in the words of one teacher, "you never know where you're going to be hired." A student teaching experience would also provide prospective teachers with confidence in teaching all grades and encourage them to apply for jobs at different levels. Conversely, the teachers thought, at the least, multi-grade experience would provide STs with a

knowledge of the level that they most feel comfortable teaching. For instance, if a ST taught at both the high school and elementary levels, he or she could make informed decisions as to what level he or she would prefer to teach.

Moreover, the point was made by some of the teachers that sometimes teachers have to accept positions at a level they do not necessarily want to teach. It would, therefore, be logical to have different grade level experiences. Most important, as one teacher explained, experience at all three levels is necessary if one were to truly qualify for the K-12 certification:

> If you are going to be certified K-12, then you definitely need some time in each of the areas, especially the middle schools. The middle school is so different from the elementary or the high school, and we kind of lump it in there as little high school kids, and it's really not.

The teachers interviewed for this study were realists. They recognized that economically it would be difficult to require STs to student teach at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. However, as with other sections of the interview, the teachers did not just offer their criticisms. They also suggested ways in which the ST could experience both the elementary and secondary schools. They indicated that if it wasn't feasible for the student teaching experience to be split into two separate semesters it might be just as effective to split the semester evenly. This would allow the ST to teach for a good amount of time in the elementary school and then for a plausible amount of time in the secondary school. During this time a ST would be able to discover the level in which they would make the most impact. One teacher went so far as to make the point that by the student teaching experience, the ST ought to have ample familiarity because the EFE's should have provided the undergraduate with ample time to hone his or her skills. One teacher suggested the following:

> I think out of 14 weeks, with seven weeks in the elementary and seven weeks in the secondary schools would be good. It helps to see kids and where they are developmentally, mentally, and everything else.

PETE Program Evaluation

The third research question asked, "What types of evaluations should be applied to PETE programs, by whom, and how often?" This portion of the interview allowed the teachers to expand on how they would measure a PETE program's effectiveness and worth. From their responses, four themes emerged: (a) what to evaluate, (b) how to evaluate, (c) who should evaluate, and (d) when should evaluation take place. The following section will clearly present each theme in detail.

Overwhelmingly, the teachers felt that if one was to measure the effectiveness of a PETE program, one would need to evaluate the products of it. The products of PETE are the graduates. The teachers thought the graduates of a program would be able to tell an evaluator about the effectiveness of a PETE program.

The teachers provided four criteria on which to evaluate the graduates of a program. First, the majority of teachers suggested that longevity in the profession was a determinant of a PETE program's success. If a graduate had stayed in the field for a long time and showed a commitment to teaching physical education, that this was due to the influence of the preparation program. Producing teachers who are committed to the field and who display that commitment is a responsibility of the PETE program. Having an impact on teachers was deemed as effective. Second, the number of graduates who are hired immediately following graduation was a determinant of the program's effectiveness. The teachers who mentioned this felt that if school districts and principals were hiring the graduates of a particular program, it correlated with the effectiveness of the program.

Third, the satisfaction level of the graduates of the program was a concern for some of the teachers. Teachers' satisfaction levels with their PETE programs after a year or two in the field would reveal some measure of the program's effectiveness. To the teachers, a few years of practice would permit the graduates to gauge the appropriateness of their preparation for teaching physical education in the public schools. A few of the teachers felt that assessing the level of professionalism of the graduates of the program was important. Although this is closely linked with commitment, the teachers described it as the level of activism in the profession. Elaborating, one of the teachers felt that if examples of professionalism were being displayed by one's graduates, such as being active in professional organizations, attaining additional degrees, attending and conducting workshops, and mentoring other teachers, it would represent the level of impact of the PETE program. Two teachers explained the preceding views:

> I think it would probably be best to interview or give a questionnaire or something regarding the strengths of the program to the graduates. The only way you're going to know whether its working is to see what is happening with the students you are putting out and what those students tell you when they come back.
>
> I think that profiles on graduates can be done. These profiles could be constructed in terms of their participation in professional organizations, presentations at workshops, and honors they had received.

Although it wasn't an overpowering theme, a few teachers added that the faculty of PETE programs should also be considered when evaluating the program. The scholarship of the faculty and their performance should be measured when determining the worth of a PETE program. The teachers cited the number of faculty hours spent in the public schools as an important factor in considering the merits of a PETE program. Faculty influence on the graduates was important because it determines the effectiveness of the graduates, therefore, it does the effectiveness of the program.

How to evaluate PETE programs evolved as a second theme. The teachers believed that the effectiveness of the PETE program could be measured in three ways: (a) asking principals, peers, parents, and students, (b)

measuring the effectiveness of the graduates' teaching through systematic and anecdotal observation, and (c) through interviews and surveys of the graduates. Interviewing those who interact daily and hire the graduates of PETE programs was the best way to measure the effectiveness of the graduate and hence its effectiveness. Asking principals about those they hired and saw on a daily basis seemed to be the preferred method for measuring effectiveness among the teachers. They felt strongly that if principals were hiring graduates of a particular program, it symbolized effectiveness as Principals would not hire people from programs that produced inferior products. As one teacher stated:

> I think that the principals could tell you why or why not your students were or were not getting hired, therefore, providing you feedback on your program. They can tell you what it is about them (the graduates) that made them attractive.

A few teachers felt that asking parents about the graduates who teach their children would provide insight as to the quality of a program. One elementary teacher stated that if the children were not going home and telling the parents about the physical education program then the physical education teacher was not doing a good job of teaching. To her, this indicated that if graduates from a program were teaching effectively, then the parents of the students would be able to tell an evaluator. Furthermore, a combination of a few elementary and middle school teachers felt that asking the students who were under the charge of the graduates would be reliable sources for determining PETE program effectiveness. If the kids could reveal something positive about their particular teacher and about what they learned in his or her class, then it would be an indicator of effectiveness of the program from which that teacher graduated. The elementary teachers felt that elementary children do not lie and that only the truth would come from their mouths. As one teacher stated:

> You should ask the students as far as they feel, how they respond to the teacher. A lot of times, out of any other teacher, kids will talk about their physical education teacher.

The second way in which some of the 18 practitioners perceived program effectiveness could be measured through observing graduates teach and gathering systematic observation and anecdotal observation data. Not all teachers, however, mentioned this as a viable way to measure effectiveness. Those teachers who did, qualified it by saying that it may be financially difficult and time intensive.

Finally, a small number of teachers thought that surveys and questionnaires would determine the satisfaction levels of graduates. Asking recent graduates would provide evaluators with vital feedback regarding the preparation of teachers. In the eyes of these teachers, feedback from recent graduates is vital because of the immediacy of their graduation. These teachers thought an effective PETE program should value the sentiments of

its graduates.

The theme of who should evaluate PETE programs focused on collaboration between practitioners and university faculty. As with their feelings on governance, the bulk of the teachers in this study felt that they had valuable input into measuring the effectiveness of PETE programs. Therefore, the teachers thought that since university faculties were ultimately in charge of PETE programs, they should conduct the evaluations and seek contributions from practitioners. They felt this way because they see PTs and beginning teachers in their schools on a regular basis and are able to assess and critique the effectiveness of those who are soon to be products of the program. A teacher also suggested that using CTs could alleviate the problem of evaluation being time intensive. By having teachers who have student teachers or work with recent graduates to help conduct the evaluation, university faculties are able to evaluate other aspects of the program and attend to improving it.

Finally, the theme of when a PETE program should be evaluated constituted a small portion of the interview on evaluation. A belief held by some teachers was that continual evaluation and assessment were needed to ensure the integrity of the program. These particular teachers felt that anything worth measuring was worth measuring often. Constant evaluation would insure the progress and improvement of a program. However, noting the fact that this might be a task too inundating to conduct every year, the other portion of teachers suggested that an evaluation of PETE programs take place every 3-5 years. The advocates for this time-line contended that this allowed for careful analysis of data and ample time for implementation of strategies for improvement and continuity.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the perspectives of practitioners regarding PETE governance, curriculum and evaluation. Practitioners in this study felt qualified, but excluded in the governance of PETE. The teachers perceived the knowledge of learners, content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge as the most important that undergraduates should receive in the PETE program. They also believed methods classes were the most effective courses that undergraduates could take. Believing early field experiences (EFE's) to be important in the preparation of physical education teachers, the practitioners believed that EFE's should be longer in duration, take place earlier in the career of the undergraduate, occur more often in the curriculum, and be conducted at schools of varying characteristics. Finally, they believed that they would be able to assist in the evaluation of a teacher preparation program, but have yet to be asked. What follows is a discussion of these themes under the following headings: (a) governance, (b) curriculum, and (c) evaluation.

Governance

The findings from this section are unique in that they are among the first regarding the governance of PETE programs. The literature suggests that most state agencies establish guidelines and requirements for teacher certification and licensure (Clark & McNergney, 1990; Oliver, 1989). The teachers in this study were strongly opposed to this practice. They believed those who are associated with state agencies were not qualified to make decisions regarding the preparation of physical education teachers because they were too far removed from the schools to know what skills were necessary to teach.

The literature further suggests that professional organizations are influential in the establishment of the policy regarding the preparation and certification of physical education teachers (Kneer, 1989). However, while the teachers believed that this should be the case, they were skeptical that it was happening. Although findings by Metzler and Freedman (1985) note that many teacher educators are not members of these organizations, the teachers felt that professional organizations were led by those in higher education. Therefore, any influence those professional organizations exerted on the governance of PETE was not truly representative of practitioners.

The teachers in this study felt that they were qualified to participate in the decision making regarding PETE programs. This supports the recent call for public school teacher and university faculty collaboration in order to improve teaching in physical education (Locke & Siedentop, 1997). However, the teachers believed that they were excluded in the process. The teachers believed that they had much to offer in terms of how to best prepare teachers for today's public schools, but they felt that nobody asked them to participate. Thus, it would behoove teacher educators to attempt to include selected practitioners in the decision making process regarding PETE. However, as the teachers mentioned, criteria should be met by those who would like to take part in the process. For example, the teachers believed those who feel that they would contribute to the governance process should have to exhibit a commitment to the profession and possibly some measure of teaching effectiveness in order to be included.

Curriculum

During this segment of the interview the teachers were questioned about their perceptions of the teacher preparation curriculum. The following discussion is divided into three areas: (a) knowledge and coursework, (b) early field experiences, and (c) student teaching.

Knowledge and coursework. The teachers felt that three types of knowledge were necessary for undergraduates to acquire in teacher preparation programs. Knowledge of learners was the most important to the teachers. The teachers believe that as undergraduates it was important to gain an understanding of students which, in turn, would help foster the love and concern for them. This opinion is also consistent with researchers who argue

that undergraduates should be prepared to teach a diverse collection of students (Butt & Pahnos, 1995; Chepyator-Thomson, 1996). Our society is becoming increasingly global and the teachers recognized this, feeling that it is further support for having a knowledge of learners.

The teachers believed content knowledge was also important. This supported the findings of research by Fincher and Schempp (1994) and Rovegno (1993) which indicated that the acquisition of content knowledge was important. The teachers believed that mastery of the subject matter was imperative for prospective physical education teachers.

The acquisition of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) was also deemed important in the preparation of physical education teachers. The finding supports Rovegno's (1995) contention that PCK is important. PCK is the process of designing the subject matter so that it is more meaningful for the students (Shulman, 1987) and is consistent with two other teacher beliefs: (a) a teacher must have knowledge of the learners, and (b) a teacher must have content knowledge. This appears logical because, in order to present the content in a meaningful manner, one needs to know the learner and the content before one can know how to best present the content to the learner.

The teachers believed that more methods classes were necessary. They believed that these classes were the "nuts and bolts" of teaching and the most effective means of training teachers. The teachers believed that providing practical experience within these classes was important, thus supporting the findings of other studies that have shown these types of methods classes were effective (Curtner-Smith 1996; O'Sullivan & Tsangaridou, 1992). Dodds' (1989) contention that "course-imbedded" (p. 82) field experiences provide students with excellent opportunities to interact in a school setting was supported by the teachers' belief that more methods courses of this nature be employed. It appears that the implementation of more methods classes was essential in the training of teachers. It may be that more methods classes would ensure that teachers receive the knowledge necessary for teaching physical education. These classes also would provide a base that can be utilized by the undergraduates as they progress in their careers.

Early field experiences (EFE's). The findings from the data suggest that EFEs need to be longer in duration. Their perceptions of the EFE support the findings of Gusthart and Rink (1983) who found that EFEs were effective in the development of PTs Thus the suggestion of the teachers to have EFEs occur more often is a logical one. If, as the research and the teachers suggest, EFEs are important then more time spent in EFEs can only be beneficial. Those designing EFEs should consider allowing PTs to spend more than a few weeks in an EFE. Additionally, adding to the time spent in the EFE, each time a PT visits a classroom can enhance the duration of the EFE. Research on the duration of EFEs is a possible area of inquiry.

According to the teachers, the EFEs should occur earlier in the PT's career. At first glance, this seems like a good idea. It can provide PTs with experience that can help them solidify their career choice. If PTs find early that they do not like teaching, they still have time to change majors. However, if a PT is placed in an EFE without proper background knowledge, the experience could prove damaging to morale. Therefore, if this was a suggestion heeded by teacher educators, it may be wise to limit early career EFEs to simple observation and assisting the regular teacher.

The teachers believed that EFEs should occur more often PETE programs. To the teachers this was consistent with the belief of the teachers that the more time spent in schools the better. This supports Taggart's (1988) proposition that more EFEs should occur before student teaching. It seems that if EFEs are effective in preparing teachers then there should be more of them. Implementing more EFEs in the curriculum would enable students to achieve the purpose stated by Dodds (1989) which was to put all the skills and knowledge learned into practice. Additionally, it provides PTs with a greater sample of what it is really like to be a physical education teacher (Placek & Silverman, 1983). The more opportunities to practice, the better the chance that the PTs will be prepared for student teaching and a teaching career.

Finally, the teachers believed that EFEs should occur in schools with varying characteristics. Therefore, PTs will be able to experience a variety of different facilities, students, and administrations. This leaves PTs armed with experiences that can be utilized anywhere. This is consistent with the practitioners' belief that teachers should be prepared to teach diverse groups of students and supports the findings of research of Chepyator-Thomson (1996) and Butt and Pahnos (1995).

Student Teaching. The findings from this study present ways in which these teachers perceived how the student teaching experience could be improved. Although there could be a problem of having to spend an extra semester in school, the teachers thought that if it was feasible, PTs should have two semesters or a full academic year of student teaching. This supports the findings of The Holmes Group (1986) who also suggested longer periods to be spent on student teaching. The teachers felt this would provide STs with a feeling of how the school year ebbs and flows and with a "real" teaching experience.

Extending the student teaching experience can also be a means of improving student teaching behaviors. The longer STs stay in an environment in which they are constantly supervised, the more opportunities they will have to receive feedback about their teaching and practice implementing the feedback received from the CT. Studies by Hutslar (1976) and Cramer (1977) have shown this to be an effective manner in which to successfully develop teaching skills in STs. Therefore, staying in a supervisory environment for a longer period of time would

serve the purpose of improving the teaching behaviors of STs. Additionally, extending the student teaching experience would allow STs to gain experience at different levels. This would address the teachers' concern that undergraduates should develop a knowledge of learners and be prepared to teach a diverse body of students.

The teachers believed the observation period during student teaching should be shortened and more than two weeks observing was wasted time. The objective of student teaching is to assume the responsibilities of the regular teacher. Regular teachers do not observe, but they teach.

The preceding perception of the teachers is closely related to the third way in which they suggested the student teaching experience could be improved. All responsibilities of the CT should be assumed by the ST, according to the practitioners. If, as Templin (1979) suggests, student teachers are to "be introduced to the realities of education" (p. 483) and truly experience what it is like to be a teacher in public schools, then it is only fitting that they perform every task that the regular teacher performs. Although not all teachers agreed, this should include coaching. Any teacher educator who may consider this when designing the student teaching experience should do so with caution. The teachers were quick to note that this could be a requirement that may be unreasonable to ask. Some STs work to pay for school and may hold night-jobs and some may also be taking classes in the late afternoon or evening. Therefore, requiring the ST to coach may be unrealistic.

Finally, in keeping with their views on extending the student teaching experience, the teachers thought STs should be given the opportunity to teach at all grade levels. This would provide more experience for the ST and address the need to acquire a knowledge of a diverse collection of learners as well (Butt & Pahnos, 1995; Chepyator-Thomson, 1996) and also assist them in deciding what grade level they would prefer to teach.

Evaluation

The teachers interviewed believed questionnaires provided to the graduates about their training were a reliable method for evaluating the PETE program. This opinion is consistent with a study by Fisher (1975) which utilized an opinion survey to gauge graduates' satisfaction levels regarding their experience. However, this view contradicts Locke (1984) who contended that undergraduates might not possess the perspective in which to make such evaluations.

The teachers also believed that observations of graduates were reliable methods of procuring information about the PETE program. This method is similar to the one used by Falcone (1978) and Freedman (1975), who used observations of graduates teaching to determine the worth of PETE programs. This suggestion from the teachers has particular significance for teacher educators. Determining the worth of a PETE program is a primary responsibility of a teacher educator. The determination of strengths and weaknesses of the program as well as

implementing strategies for improvement are important facets of preparing teachers. However, the process of doing so is not easy. According to the teachers, it is only logical to determine the caliber of the program by evaluating the products of the program and getting feedback from them once they have graduated.

The teachers felt that if graduates of the program are evaluated then sound evaluation criteria should be established. The teachers believed that if a program was producing graduates who were committed to the profession, impacted by the program, satisfied with their preparation after entering the profession, and had high rates of professionalism, that it was producing graduates that were indicative of an effective PETE program. To the teachers, graduates' satisfaction level and performance were the most important criteria in which to judge the value of the program.

Implications for Physical Education Teacher Preparation

The findings from this study hold several implications for the preparation of physical education teachers. The implications that follow are specifically for PETE programs in regard to: (a) governance, (b) curriculum, and (c) evaluation. Based on the findings of this study, four recommendations are offered to those in PETE:

Include Public School Teachers in the Governance of Teacher Preparation Programs

The teachers in this study felt that they can contribute to the preparation of teachers, however, as a group, they felt excluded. Teacher educators should include public school teachers in the decision making process regarding the PETE program. Teachers can provide valuable insight in the preparation of teachers and their advice should not go unheeded. However, as the teachers suggested, some criteria for selecting the teachers who will partake in the governance process must be established. These criteria should include experience and dedication to the field of teaching physical education.

Increase Methods Courses

These teachers believed that this was the most important class that an undergraduate could take. They believed that methods classes were the "nuts and bolts" of teaching. Therefore, multiple methods classes should be required in the teacher preparation curriculum. The teachers believed that the methods classes should include a barrage of topics such as management routines, assessment strategies, subject matter content, and teaching techniques. The teachers felt that methods classes which included a practical element would also prove to be more effective. If undergraduates were allowed to observe effective teachers and possibly teach under the supervision of effective teachers, the methods classes would be more meaningful.

Increase Early Field Experiences (EFEs)

The teachers strongly and uniformly expressed the need for more EFEs. They also stated that the duration

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of the EFE needed to be longer, the EFE must occur early in the career, and occur more often. Thus, teacher educators should look to designing PETE programs with multiple EFEs that start early in the career and last a long period of time. During the EFEs, PTs should become familiar with teaching in a public school and practice their teaching skills. If sites are available, the PTs should be able to teach in schools of varying characteristics, such as urban, suburban, and rural schools.

Conduct the Evaluation of PETE Programs Utilizing Public School Teachers

The teachers realized that evaluation is a time-intensive process and that the best way to determine the worth of a program is to evaluate the products of it. Thus, it would be best to employ others to help in the process. Teachers believed they were logical choices for assisting. Since many teachers work closely with PTs in the role of CT, they would have access to watching students teach. Furthermore, teachers often work with recent graduates of PETE programs and therefore are able to collect useful data on graduates. It was suggested by the teachers that evaluations of PETE programs take place every three to five years. The methods to evaluate programs suggested by teachers included systematic observation and anecdotal observation data and surveying the satisfaction level of graduates.

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